

OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

27 January 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Dingemans (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Jones, Mrs Maconachie, Nash, Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate and Dr Walsh.

Councillors L Brown, Bower, Dendle, Elkins, Maconachie and Wensley were also present for either all or part of the meeting.

500. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, officers and representatives of the press to the meeting.

He especially welcomed Councillor Mrs Maconachie who was returning as a Member to the Committee.

501. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Clayden, Mrs Daniells, Edwards, English, Hitchins and McIntyre and from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown.

502. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer has advised Members of interim arrangements to follow when making declarations of interest. They have been advised that for the reasons explained below, they should make their declarations on the same basis as the former Code of Conduct using the descriptions of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Reasons

- The Council has adopted the Government’s example for a new local code of conduct, but new policies and procedures relating to the new local code are yet to be considered and adopted.
- Members have not yet been trained on the provisions on the new local code of conduct.

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- The definition of Pecuniary Interests is narrower than the definition of Prejudicial Interests, so by declaring a matter as a Prejudicial Interest, that will cover the requirement to declare a Pecuniary Interest in the same matter.

Where a member declares a “Prejudicial Interest”, this will, in the interests of clarity for the public, be recorded in the minutes as a Prejudicial and Pecuniary Interest.

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

#### 503. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 November 2014 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

#### 504. ANNUAL REVIEW OF ACTIVITY CENTRE PROVISION – AGE UK WEST SUSSEX

The Chairman welcomed the Council’s Leisure & Voluntary Sector Manager to the meeting who introduced the annual review of the District Council’s Activity Centre Provision within the District. He explained that the existing Contract with Age UK West Sussex was due to expire in 2016 and that Age UK (West Sussex) had successfully run this Contract for a period of 8 years. During this time, both Centres had been revamped externally and numerous internal changes had been made to make the Centres more user-friendly.

Before asking questions, a couple of Members of the Committee expressed disappointment over the fact that the usual representatives from Age UK West Sussex were not present at the meeting and they asked why the Committee had not received the usual Business Plan or Annual Delivery Plan Report. It was felt that without this adequate representation it was very difficult for the Committee to be able to properly scrutinise this annual review. The Chairman responded stating that a summarised version of the traditional report had been provided to reduce the length of the meeting. He re-assured Members that if there were any detailed questions that could not be responded to, then a written response would be obtained from Age UK (West Sussex).

The Committee then asked questions. Most of these related to the very positive work that had been undertaken to dramatically improve both Centres. The following questions were also asked which could not be responded to at the meeting and so the Leisure & Voluntary Sector Manager promised to ensure that a written response, via email, would be provided. These were:

- The lift at the Laburnum Centre had not been working and so an update on whether this problem had been rectified was required;
- Had the two hour free disc parking scheme boosted attendance levels at the Laburnum Centre, especially from the Lion Street car park?
- The Laburnum Centre had introduced its own mini bus transport scheme but this had been withdrawn and so how much was it costing members to use Sammy Community Transport each time?
- Was the daily attendance cost of £2 per visit still available?
- What methods were used by Age UK West Sussex in attracting new members?

The Committee again praised how effectively Age UK had taken over the services and how the number of activities provided had blossomed over the years. They hoped that what was being offered now would continue in future years, even though the Council’s Contract would expire with Age UK West Sussex next year. In view of this, reservations were expressed about the provision of the service in the future and as the Contract with Age UK West Sussex had worked well and the required savings had been delivered. It was explained that West Sussex County Council (WSCC) was currently reviewing the provision of activities for older people across the County and had proposed that the Council should procure a service provider for its Activity Centres and other District wide activities as part of that Contract. This would entail a competitive tendering exercise and the Committee was advised that Members of the Environmental Services and Community Development Working Group would consider options in respect of the future delivery of these activities. A report on these issues would be taken to a future Cabinet meeting for a decision on the service to be provided and the procurement process which confirmed that Members would be involved in the process.

Concerns were expressed over this process and the involvement of WSCC. The Committee was of the view that the Council would need to adopt a very robust approach in negotiating the new Contract. The Leisure & Voluntary Sector Manager reassured Members that WSCC were looking to co-ordinate better the activities for older people and that once these options were available that Members would be presented with the opportunity to review the proposals and to agree on the best solution for the Council.

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The Chief Executive referred Members to the forthcoming Members’ Vision Seminar to be held on 10 February 2015 as this would provide Members with the opportunity to outline what it would wish the Council to provide for the future and that the discussions on 10 February could assist the Council in terms of the direction it wished to follow in relation to this service.

Following a further short further discussion, the Committee

**RECOMMEND TO CABINET**

That Age UK (West Sussex’s) Annual Review be approved.

*(During the course of the discussion on this item, Councillor Dr Walsh declared a Personal Interest as he was a Member of West Sussex County Council).*

**505. COUNCIL BUDGET – 2015/2016**

In the absence of the Head of Finance and Property, the Chairman welcomed the Financial Services Manager to the meeting and invited her to work through the Council’s Budget for 2015/2016 highlighting what she felt were the significant areas that Members should be made aware of. She outlined that any comments that the Committee wished to make would be fed back to the next meeting of Cabinet taking place on 9 February 2015 before the Minutes from this meeting would be submitted to the Special Meeting of the Council on 24 February 2015.

The Financial Services Manager then presented the Council’s Budget for 2015/2016 and explained the main strategic issues:-

- The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in December 2014 was the third year of funding under the new Business Rates Retention scheme;
- Revenue Grant Settlement from Central Government continued to reduce significantly each year;
- The New Homes Bonus had been relatively buoyant again but Members were advised that this could change if the level of house building tailed off within the District;
- The Council was proposing that it should accept the Council Tax Freeze grant which was in line with its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS);

- With the Revenue Budget, £1.874 m had been drawn down from reserves which was higher than forecast in the Summer 2014 review of the MTFs. This was the second year of implementing an enhanced capital programme including items which were one-off in nature such as the Hotham Park Café; beach hut replacements; gym enhancements at the Arun Leisure Centre; and Public Realm improvements works to the East Bank flood defence project.
- The Housing revenue Account (HRA) rent increase had been set at 2.2% based on CPI plus 1% in accordance with the Government's new social housing rent policy.
- A key risk to the HRA Budget was the significant increase in Right to Buy (RTB) disposals as the loss of income on rent would impact the HRA business plan financial model;

The Chairman having thanked the Financial Services Manager for her presentation, invited questions from Members which are as outlined below:-

- Concern was expressed that £29k had been included in the contingencies budget for Members' IT to cover the cost of IT equipment which would be mitigated by the deletion of the Members' IT Allowance. It was pointed out that this recommendation had not been agreed at the last meeting of the Council held on 14 January 2015 and so needed to be removed. The Financial Services Manager outlined that the Budget assumed that the cost would be mitigated and that if this changed the funding available in 2015/2016 would have to be revisited by Members as it would be further growth;
- Concern was expressed over the significant financial challenges being faced by all local authorities making it very difficult for them to plan ahead. This was seen as a missed opportunity. A Member of the Committee repeated his request made before at previous meetings in that the Council should use its balances to enhance its income by investing in new businesses and creating an Arun Enterprise Fund.
- The constant use of the Council's balances to fund unplanned items was a concern, especially as it was likely that the Council would have to make further significant savings in the future.
- Concern had been expressed over the Business Rates Retention Scheme and the risk that the Council faced with appeals. Though it was acknowledged that the establishment of the Business Rate Equalisation Reserve would help to mitigate the risk associated with the volatility of this scheme.
- Concern was expressed over the Council's decision to not passport onto Town and Parish Councils the full amount of local council tax support grant. In one Member's view, this would impact on some of

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the residents of the District as this could result in Town and Parish Councils not being able to contribute to funding services such as CCTV and public conveniences.

- Looking at the HRA, concern was expressed over the impact that Right to Buy purchases would have on the Council’s existing housing stock, due to the fact that an increase in purchases would reduce it and would impact the HRA Budget and would mean that there would be less flexibility to fund the Capital Programme. The question was asked as to how many new units needed to be built to fill the gap in terms of the number of Right to Buy purchases made. This was seen as a big risk for the Council.

The Committee then noted the contents of the Council Budget for 2015/2016 which would be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting on 9 February and then a Special meeting of the Council on 24 February 2014.

506. CORPORATE PLAN 2013-2017 – QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE OUTTURN REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

The Committee received and noted a report from the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive which set out the Quarter 2 performance outturn for the Corporate Plan indicators covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2014.

507. SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2013-2017 – QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE OUTTURN REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2014

The Committee received and noted a report from the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive which set out the Quarter 2 performance outturn for the Service Delivery Plan (SDP) performance indicators which were measured at 6 months (quarterly and six monthly targets) for the period 1 April to 30 September 2014.

In noting the report comments were made about some of the planning indicators which were under performing. The Assistant Director for Planning and Economic Regeneration explained that the staff shortages experienced during this period had had a negative impact on performance figures and had presented major challenges in tackling large projects such as the Local Plan.

Comments were also made about the working days lost due to sickness absence and whether a more accurate picture of sickness levels across the authority could be seen if long-term sickness absences could be separated from short-term absences. Members were advised that the Assistant Director for Customer Services was planning to look at this further.

508. PROGRESS REVIEW FOR THE CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS – 2013/2017

The Committee received a report from the Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 19 January 2015. This report presented the current position, as at 30 October 2014, of the 19 Corporate Plan indicators over the last 18 months and it set out recommendations from the relevant member of the Corporate Management Team and the respective Cabinet Member on any alteration to the proposed targets for each indicator for the remaining 2 years of the Corporate Plan.

The Committee was advised that changes to targets were proposed for 11 out of the 19 Corporate Plan indicators and this was the Committee’s opportunity to review the information and to submit any views and comments to Cabinet for consideration at its next meeting to be held on 9 February 2015. The Chairmen of the three Working Groups had also been invited to submit their comments so that these too could be presented to the next meeting of Cabinet.

It was anticipated that Cabinet would then agree the Corporate Plan targets for the remaining 2 years (2015-2017) and that these would then be recommended to Full Council on 11 March 2015, with any new targets taking effect from April 2015.

The Committee then worked through the report looking at the detail of any recommended changes to the Corporate Plan indicator targets. The Committee had no comments to make on the proposed changes to 16 of the Corporate Plan Indicators. There were 3 Corporate Plan indicators which were discussed further by the Committee and the table below outlines comments which the Committee wished Cabinet to consider further at its meeting to be held on 9 February 2015:

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Performance Indicator	Existing Target 14/15	Any amendment suggested to Target for 2015-2017 from CMT/Cabinet Member	Suggested new target from April 2015 onwards from CMT/Cabinet Member	Comments from OSC on 27.1.15 for Cabinet to consider on 9.2.15
CSH006 % of homelessness approaches where homelessness prevented	90%	Yes	80%	<p><b>Yes – Committee comments:</b></p> <p>It was suggested that the target should be somewhere between 80%-90% rather than reducing to 80% and that the Council should aim to continue to prevent as many homelessness cases as possible, especially as it was expected that there would be a higher rate of this in the coming months/years.</p> <p>The Assistant Director for Customer Services to look at this target again and to report to Cabinet on 9 February with more information for Cabinet to consider.</p> <p><b>Cabinet's views to be sought on 9.2.15</b></p>

<p>PER020 Overall Employment rate (working-age)</p>	<p>72%</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>85%</p>	<p><b>Yes - OSC comments</b></p> <p>The Committee suggested that this target be kept at 85%.</p> <p>The Assistant Director for Planning &amp; Economic Regeneration agreed to look at this target again and to report to Cabinet on 9 February with more information for Cabinet to consider.</p> <p><b>Cabinet's views to be sought on 9.2.15</b></p>
<p>ESC001 % household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting</p>	<p>38%</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>38%</p>	<p><b>Yes – Committee comments:</b></p> <p>It was felt that the target should be higher than 38% going forward, especially in light of the need to recycle more in the future.</p> <p>The Assistant Director for Environmental Services agreed to look at this target again and to report to Cabinet on 9 February with more information for Cabinet to consider.</p> <p><b>Cabinet's views to be sought on 9.2.15</b></p>

The Committee then

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

That 16 of the 19 Corporate Plan indicators be agreed and that the Committee’s comments on the 3 remaining Corporate Plan indicators be put to Cabinet for consideration.

509. CABINET MEMBER QUESTIONS AND UPDATES

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance, Councillor Wensley, was asked a question relating to the distribution of the Council’s magazine – Arun Times. This was seen as disappointing as there were ‘patches’ in the District where Arun Times had not been delivered, these being central Bognor Regis. The other problem was that as Councillors had not been advised when Arun Times was to be delivered, they had not, until now, made a comment about its lack of delivery. This was seen as a missed opportunity for the Council in view of the many projects underway such as Bognor Regis Regeneration. Councillor Wensley responded stating that he would raise this matter with the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs Brown.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Elkins, provided updates on several issues. Firstly, on homelessness, and the Council’s Budget for 2015/2016, he referred to additional funds provided, as agreed at Full Council on 14 January 2015, to deal with increasing cases of homelessness. He referred to and praised the work of the Glenlogie Night Shelter in Bognor Regis which was run by Stonepillow. He also referred to Right to Buy disposals as the loss of income on rent would impact the HRA financial model.

The Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, Councillor Bower, informed the Committee that the Council had received 700 consultation responses in respect of the draft Local Plan. He reminded Members of his update made to its last meeting in relation to the Network Rail consultation on the Sussex Rail Usage Study. He had now seen the consultation response submitted by WSCC which accorded to the comments he had made to the last meeting. This confirmed that the Arundel Chord would continue to be pursued.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure & Amenities, Councillor Dendle, provided a short presentation which supported his Update Report provided with the agenda on his Portfolio area.

Numerous questions were asked. These related to:

- the purchasing of new Pay & Display Machines in the Council’s car parks. The Assistant Director for Environmental Services explained the procurement process that had been followed which involved the standardising of machines across West Sussex;
- the timetable for the new Leisure Centre at Littlehampton. It was felt that this had slipped. It was explained that there had been no sudden slippage but that the procurement process for this project had been vast involving the issuing of contract documents and the scoping of work looking at ground conditions and a range of issues that needed to be brought back to Members in due course.
- questions were asked about the Cleansing/Waste Management contract in terms of the timetable in place for the retendering exercise and whether a weekly collection would continue? The Assistant Director for Environmental Services responded to various matters that Members would consider over the next two years in connection with the retendering of a new Cleansing Contract.

510. NOTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT TASK AND FINISH WORKING PARTY HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2015

In the absence of the Chairman of the Working Party, Councillor Hitchins, Councillor Dingemans presented the Minutes of the meeting of the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Working Party held on 7 January 2015.

Councillor Dingemans referred Members to a series of recommendations at Minute 5 (Council Tax Empty Property Discounts 2016/2017) which set out the options that had been discussed for possible change to the level of Council Tax discount for an empty/unoccupied property.

The Committee

RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That

- (1) its existing terms of Reference be extended to include “examine and review the levels of discount for empty/unoccupied Council Tax properties for 2016/2017”; and

- (2) The following options discussed by the Working Party be approved:

Uninhabitable Properties – that the current position of 50% discount for twelve months remain the same, but following that twelve month period then no discount be given;

Substantially Unfurnished Properties – this be changed from 50% discount for 6 months to 50% discount for 3 months, following the 3 month discount then a full charge will become applicable;

Second Homes – no change be made to the existing discount; and

Long Term Empty Properties – that no change be made to existing properties

Councillor Dingemans then referred Members to the next recommendation at Minute 6 (Council Tax Reduction Scheme – Year 4 – April 2016). Before debate on this recommendation commenced, the Resources Director and Deputy Chief Executive advised Members that, in his opinion, it was fair to say that any reference to a potential decision on this matter was somewhat premature. This was because the Council had already approved, for Year 3 (2015/2016), no change be made for any claimants. What the Council had to consider now was that based on a recent Local Government Association (LGA) survey undertaken, Arun was one of only 45 out of 300 local authorities that was offering the same level of discount available before the Government had made the 10% budget cut from April 2013. Bearing in mind that there would be National and Local Elections in May 2015, the point needed to be reinforced that any new Government would publish national budget proposals early on after the General Election and was likely to undertake a comprehensive spending review which would almost certainly inflict further public sector austerity measures for the term of the new Parliament. In view of this, the Committee was asked to consider recommending that this matter be revisited after May 2015 and when the consultation responses from precepting authorities had been received and all of the wider financial implications known.

Following discussion, the Committee then

RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That

- (1) the considered approach to be taken in the formulation of a new scheme be dependent upon the results of the consultation with the main precepting authorities; and
- (2) the timetable be agreed and remain unchanged at this time but revisited when the consultation responses had been received and as it had been drafted with sufficient time built into it to allow flexibility in considering the scheme and any further options that should be considered.

511. UPDATE FROM MEETING OF WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEES (HASC) HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2014 AND 21 JANUARY 2015

In the absence of Councillor Edwards, the Committee received and noted two feedback reports which had been provided by Councillor Dr Walsh following his attendance at the last two meetings of the County Council's Health and Adult Social Care Committee held on 5 December 2014 and 21 January 2015. Both of these feedback reports had been circulated to the meeting.

Councillor Dr Wash updated the Committee by confirming that BUPA CSH had withdrawn from the Musculo-Skeletal Services (MSK) Contract and so the Clinical Commission Group (CCG) was now committed to re-examining this as a matter of urgency. A report back on this would be made to the Committee in due course.

512. UPDATE FROM MEETING OF THE SUSSEX POLICE & CRIME PANEL HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2015

The Committee received and noted a verbal feedback report from Councillor L Brown following his attendance at meeting of the Sussex Police & Crime Panel held on 23 January 2015.

Councillor L Brown reported that the Sussex Police's capital budget had been noted and that £15 million in savings would be made in the next 4 years. Grant funding would remain around the same but there was approximately a 2% reduction in Sussex Police core funding.

The Panel had been asked to support a recommendation that the precept be increased by 1.95% and this had been supported. A Working Group would now be established to look at the future model of policing.

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513. WORK PROGRAMME

In receiving and noting its Work Programme for its last meeting in the Municipal Year, the Committee was advised of one minor change that was required. This was to remove the feedback item from the Council Tax Support Task and Finish Working Party as no further meeting had been arranged.

(The meeting concluded at 8.05 pm.)